



How can Consumers Reduce the Risk of Foodborne Illness From Fresh Produce?



Foodborne illness can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy persons with foodborne illness can experience fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Following are some steps that consumers can take to reduce the risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce:

- At the store, purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh cut produce, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- At home, chill and refrigerate foods. After purchase, put produce that needs refrigeration away promptly. (Fresh whole produce such as bananas and potatoes do not need refrigeration.) Fresh produce should be refrigerated within two hours of peeling or cutting. Leftover cut produce should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Wash hands often. Hands should be washed with hot soapy water before and after handling fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood, as well as after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables with cool tap water immediately before eating. Don't use soap or detergents. Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. Cut away any bruised or damaged areas before eating.
- Wash surfaces often. Cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops should be washed with hot soapy water and sanitized after coming in contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Sanitize after use with a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.
- Don't cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils when handling fresh produce. If possible, use one clean cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. During food preparation, wash cutting boards, utensils or dishes that have come into contact with fresh produce, raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or use ice gel packs when transporting or storing perishable food outdoors, including cut fresh fruits and vegetables.

Following these steps will help reduce the risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce.

Source: Excerpted from May 26, 2000 FDA Talk Paper: [FDA Advises Consumers About Fresh Produce Safety](#)

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